



ROBIN SPECULAND

# How to inspire people?

Do you want to inspire or motivate your employees when implementing strategy - the difference can be the difference between success and failure!

**O**rganizations achieving excellence in execution distinguish themselves by their people being inspired and engaged to take the right actions. Inspiration is the goal, not motivation. Why? In the field of strategy implementation, motivation is mostly extrinsic and short-lived, whereas inspiration is intrinsic and long-term. Organizations today are either disrupting or being disrupted, and as a result, implementing strategy has become even more important as they need to transform. The challenge is that more implementations fail than succeed at a time we are transforming more frequently than ever before

A key challenge for leaders is that during these times of rapid changes, people are suffering from “change fatigue” and leaders need to inspire their people, not just motivate them. Deepak Chopra puts it elegantly, “Instead of motivation, look for inspiration. Inspiration comes from the same word as spirit. When you are inspired, the spirit moves you.” Leaders need to move their people to engage in strategy implementation.

In the implementation consultancy I provide to organizations, I constantly see frontline staff being asked to take on new challenges. The leader’s responsibility is to keep “fanning the flames of inspiration”. The word “inspiration” means to be in spirit, to breathe life into something. When people are tuned into their spirits, they are drawn to perform their best. Leaders need to inspire their people to breathe life into the strategy implementation and aim to generate in their people a sense of urgency and purpose that engages them to take the right actions on their own accord over time. However, most strategy launches only result in motivating people — a quality that has a short-term fuse. In comparison, inspiration is a stronger emotion that lasts significantly longer than motivation and has greater impact. Simon Sinek explains that, “Great companies don’t hire skilled people and motivate them; they hire already motivated people and inspire them.”

Researchers Eric Garton and Michael C. Mankins state that, “It would take two and a quarter satisfied employees to generate the same output as one inspired employee.”<sup>1</sup> Additional



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research<sup>2</sup> revealed that inspired people are more creative, robust and targeted in their work. Nancy J. Adler, Ph.D., S. Bronfman Chair of Management at the Desautels Faculty of Management at McGill University, gave insights in her article “The Arts & Leadership: Now That We Can Do Anything, What Will We Do” where she mentioned that “Whereas 20th-century managerial frameworks focused primarily on motivation, often attempting to identify sets of rewards and punishment that would inspire workers to produce more, 21st-century leaders know that such motivation is not enough. The leadership challenge today is to inspire people, not simply to motivate them.”<sup>3</sup>

### So, how do you inspire people?

Leaders may attempt to push people towards a desired result through incentives and “rewards and punishment” (as Dr. Adler stated). But although this might have worked in the past for short-term goals, it doesn’t work for long-term strategy execution. Excellence in execution is achieved by people being inspired and engaged throughout the implementation journey.

In this rapidly changing world of people being self-directed, the old model of control is being replaced by inspire. That means when preparing to launch your new strategy, first identify which factors will inspire your people and then address those factors. And one is people feeling the new strategy is personal to them. Piyush Gupta, the CEO of DBS Bank in Singapore, believed that to engage his people, he needed to shake hands with almost every one of the 17,000 people (at that time) in his organization. As he did, he personally invited each of them to participate in the execution.<sup>4</sup> Stating other examples, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz inspired his people by treating them with dignity and respect. Sir Richard Branson expressed passion for his team members by giving them all the tools they needed to elevate customer service within the numerous companies he owns. Google inspires its people by designing a workplace that feels more like home.


Ask yourself these questions about how to inspire your people:

- **Have you shared the passion around the strategy’s potential?**  
As a leader, you emerge from crafting the strategy feeling excited about the new opportunities. Transfer that excitement to your people. Become a “state inducer,” someone who induces his or her state of mind on others.
- **Have you discussed peoples’ ideas and thoughts on the strategy?**  
Sharing the passion is not enough to inspire. Listen and discuss the new strategy with your people. Engage your people in a conversation.
- **Have you provided the new skills?**  
A new strategy means doing things differently and often using new skills. People feel inspired when given the chance to do so.
- **Ask your employees “What can you do to participate in strategy execution?”**  
Keep asking this question. The answers provide guidance and feedback throughout the journey. Then make sure employees can see a clear line of sight between their actions and the effect they have on the strategy objectives.
- **Do you have a “to-stop” list?**  
Empower people to abolish projects and processes that no longer add value under the direction of the new strategy. This also creates the time and resources to focus on what’s adding value to the strategy.
- **Have you aligned reinforcements?**  
People must feel they’re being recognized for



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their efforts. Additional work by employees to execute strategy requires additional work by leaders to reinforce the right actions. Effective leaders offer support at critical moments.

In his excellent book *Start with Why*, Simon Sinek stated that “There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”<sup>5</sup> Once people are inspired, there is a greater chance of them being engaged. Don’t be like the CEO who was asked how many people work in his organization. He replied, “About half of them!” 

*(The article is adapted from Robin Speculand’s latest book and fourth in the series, Excellence in Execution – How to Implement Your Strategy, Morgan James NY)*

### References

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- 3 <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?sessionid=EE400815F9493BD54218D32B283FFE43?doi=10.1.1.505.8017>
- 4 View Piyush sharing this message: [http://www.implementation-hub.com/tools\\_tips\\_techniques/videos/piyush-gupta-chief-executive-officer-and-director-dbs-group](http://www.implementation-hub.com/tools_tips_techniques/videos/piyush-gupta-chief-executive-officer-and-director-dbs-group)
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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ROBIN SPECULAND** is an expert in strategy implementation and is the founder and CEO of Bridges Business Consultancy Int. He created the Implementation Hub, the world’s first online portal dedicated to strategy implementation.